



MONTSERRAT POPULATION POLICY

FINAL DRAFT

Implementation of the UN Joint SDG Fund Programme on Integrated Population and
Policy Solutions to Accelerate SDGs Achievement in Barbados and Montserrat
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
GoM	Government of Montserrat
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
MoHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MPP	Montserrat Population Policy
MPPS	Montserrat Population Policy Secretariat
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
SSEEGSR Roadmap)	Montserrat Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap)
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UK	United Kingdom
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UWI	University of West Indies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montserrat, a British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean, is one of the most demographically fragile countries globally, grappling with challenges such as a small population, low fertility rates, high emigration, and limited immigration. These issues threaten the island's economic stability and social cohesion. The Montserrat Government has developed this comprehensive, rights-based Population Policy to address these challenges, build resilience, and ensure sustainable economic, social, and environmental growth. Supported by the United Nations Joint SDG Fund Programme, this policy aims to align population growth with Montserrat's Sustainable Social, Environmental, and Economic Growth Strategy and RoadMap. The Montserrat Population Policy (MPP) seeks to achieve four primary outcomes:

Improving Quality of Life: The policy aims to enhance the quality of life in Montserrat to attract and retain residents, particularly young people, through investments in health, education, social protection, and overall living conditions. This includes promoting healthy diets, improving healthcare, enhancing education, and increasing social protection to create a supportive and inclusive environment for a vibrant society.

Managing International Migration: A key aspect of the policy is to manage international migration to meet workforce needs and foster population growth. The MPP introduces a ten-year skills-based immigration plan to attract skilled workers and align migration with national development goals. Fast-track residency permits, integration services, and diaspora engagement initiatives, such as investment opportunities and programs facilitating return migration, are crucial to achieving these objectives.

Ensuring Demographic Resilience: The policy integrates population growth into Montserrat's national economic development, social equity, and environmental sustainability strategy. The goal is to create an enabling context for family formation and fertility, providing financial and practical support for childbearing, improving access to reproductive health services, and promoting flexible work policies to encourage higher birth rates and sustainable population growth.

Building an Integrated Data Ecosystem: Establishing a robust data ecosystem is critical to monitoring the policy's implementation and adjusting it to effectively respond to changing demographics. This includes improving demographic data quality, enhancing data analysis, and ensuring evidence-based decision-making.

Given the range of proposed actions and the limitations of available resources, a set of prioritized policy recommendations has been designed for implementation from 2025 to 2027. Montserrat faces critical demographic issues that require immediate action to fulfill its Population Policy goals. Given the island's specific challenges, it is crucial for the government to focus on the most pressing interventions. Key immediate priorities include stimulating job creation to attract and retain workers, which is essential to counteract demographic decline. This approach aims to provide viable opportunities for residents who might otherwise consider emigration, thereby stabilizing and sustaining Montserrat's population. By addressing these pressing issues, Montserrat can create a foundation for long-term demographic resilience and socio-economic stability, ultimately ensuring that the island's development goals are met effectively and sustainably.

The policy's success will depend on collaborative implementation, monitoring, and evaluation involving not just government departments but also civil society and international partners. Through its targeted strategies and collaborative approach, Montserrat has the potential to not just overcome its social and economic challenges associated with the demographic context and trends but also achieve long-term sustainability and create a prosperous, resilient island aligned with economic, social, and environmental goals.

INTRODUCTION

Montserrat, a British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean, is one of the most demographically fragile countries in the world due to the numerous demographic challenges experienced over the past decades. The island's small population, low fertility rates, high emigration, and limited immigration have created a precarious demographic situation that threatens its economic stability and social cohesion. For that reason, Montserrat's Government has requested to develop a comprehensive, rights-based, and efficient Population Policy that can break the country's demographic vulnerability cycle, build demographic resilience, leave no one behind and help strengthen economic, demographic, and environmental resilience by ensuring the availability of a demographic and labour force age structure conducive to bolstering economic and population growth.

The preparation of the Montserrat Population Policy has been supported by the United Nations Joint SDG Fund Programme, focusing on integrated population and policy solutions to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This initiative involves extensive consultations with national stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations, and international partners. The policy framework aligns with the Montserrat Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap (SSEEGSR), emphasizing the interconnected goals of economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

This policy document outlines the historical context and current demographic trends that have shaped Montserrat's population dynamics. The analysis reveals significant challenges, including the impact of natural disasters such as Hurricane Hugo and the Soufrière Hills volcano eruption, which led to substantial population displacement and a subsequent decline in population size. Additionally, the policy addresses the ageing population, low fertility rates, and high emigration rates that further exacerbate the demographic crisis.

Responding to Montserrat's demographic challenges, the Montserrat Population Policy (MPP) presented aims to help the country respond and mitigate the impacts of its demographic trajectories – and harness the opportunities that also come with it- and contribute to its population resilience. It sets forth a vision for a prosperous and resilient island with a vibrant economy, attractive living conditions, and a healthy and equitable society. The policy's overarching goal is to align Montserrat's demographic aspirations with economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social equity through rights-based and gender-responsive strategies. The policy aims to create a conducive environment for family formation, fertility, and migration by managing and improving the social and economic conditions that influence population change.

The MPP involves actions to strengthen the capacity to understand and anticipate the population dynamics Montserrat is experiencing and ensure the country has the skills, tools, political will, and public support to create a better social and economic environment context for fertility and couples' reproductive conditions. It also considers ways to manage and regulate migration effectively by fostering strategies that curb emigration and attract immigrants, encompassing Montserratian returnees and new non-Montserratian migrants. Additionally, the MPP aims to improve human capital by promoting investments in education and reducing adult morbidity and mortality by NCD mortality rates, focusing on improving health outcomes throughout life, emphasising adults and older people. These policies will help to create and sustain a demographically more resilient society by ensuring better governance and a more inclusive economy, intrinsically linked to the broader effort to promote sustainable development. Finally, it highlights the importance of a strategy for building a solid data ecosystem, including high-quality data and projection modelling, to ensure a future-oriented, evidence-based, and people-centred approach.

In developing this policy, the Government of Montserrat seeks to build a demographically resilient society that supports economic development and sustainable growth. The policy's strategic actions are designed to address immediate demographic challenges while preparing for future shifts in population dynamics. By fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment, the policy aims to attract and retain residents, including the Montserratian diaspora, and ensure that the island's population growth aligns with its broader development goals.

I. TOWARD A NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY FOR MONTSERRAT

The Government of Montserrat has sanctioned the Montserrat Population Policy (MPP) preparation to develop a framework for a set of strategic actions that help the country ensure demographic resilience and contribute to economic growth, environmental sustainability, and equity.

Background and purpose

The Government of Montserrat (GoM) commissioned in 2023 the development of the Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap (SSEEGSR), prepared after extensive consultation with the Cabinet, Civil Service, and other staff of the Montserrat Government. The most recent document delineates the national sustainable development strategy and is the primary reference to the Population Policy presented in this document. Montserrat's strategic vision in the SSEEGSR is "... to be a prosperous and resilient island, with a healthy economy, where people want to live and work, and which people want to visit."

The UN Joint SDG Fund Programme on "Integrated Population and Policy Solutions to Accelerate SDGs Achievement in Barbados and Montserrat" was developed with the support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Fund Joint Programme for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Launched at UN House Barbados on 25 November 2022, this 2-year Joint Programme (2022-2024) is being led by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and supported by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women), and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office.

In support of the implementation of the SSEEGSR, the Joint Programme's results are contributing to developing and strengthening the capacity to better integrate evidence on population dynamics, sexual and reproductive health, and gender equality and their links to sustainable development, as well as improving the production and access to quality, real-time demographic data, and gender analysis.

Building on the population situation analysis conducted under the same project, the government has sought the assistance of this UN initiative to address and mitigate Montserrat's demographic vulnerabilities. The result is the development of a Population Policy that creates a framework that responds to current demographic trends and proactively prepares for future shifts by comprehensively understanding, anticipating, and preparing for sustainable, rights-based solutions to demographic challenges. This approach ensures that all demographic interventions uphold the dignity and rights of individuals, strengthen the nation's resilience against demographic challenges, and strategically meet the sustainable development needs of the country.

II. OVERALL SITUATION ANALYSIS

Historical context

Montserrat, a British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean with less than 4,500 persons, is a small island part of the Leeward Islands known as the "Emerald Isle of the Caribbean." Its territory is about 16 km (10 mi) long and 11 km (7 mi) wide, with a coastline of about 40 km (25 mi) long. Montserrat is renowned for its dramatic landscape, which includes the active Soufrière Hills volcano. Montserrat is a full member of the Caribbean Community and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean State.

Montserrat has demonstrated exceptional resilience in the face of natural disasters. In 1989, the island was struck by Hurricane Hugo, a Category 5 storm that caused widespread devastation. Most of the island's infrastructure, including the airport, docking facilities, and many homes, was damaged. The population was left without access to necessities like water, electricity, and communication for extended periods. Despite this, the island embarked on a long and challenging recovery process.

Only six years later, in 1995, the Soufrière Hills volcano erupted, and the country faced a decade of turmoil after the awakening after centuries of dormancy. The initial eruptions in 1995 forced evacuations and left the southern part of the island uninhabited. In 1997, catastrophic pyroclastic flows and lahars obliterated the capital, Plymouth, necessitating its abandonment and causing 19 deaths. Further eruptions and dome collapse through the early 2000s repeatedly disrupted attempts at recovery, destroying the airport and leading to the establishment of a new capital in the north. The 1995 volcanic eruption caused massive, forced migration, with a significant portion of the population moving to the UK, or Montserrat is on the brink of a catastrophic population crisis. The reduction in population size in the late nineties due to the emigration that resulted from the volcanic eruption and the small—or negative—natural population growth that followed have generated stagnation in the country's population (see Figure 1).

Despite these challenges, the Montserratian community demonstrated remarkable resilience and, with the support of the Government, was able to rebuild lives and infrastructure while adapting to the ongoing volcanic threat and considering the limitations in geographic mobility caused by the eruption. In the aftermath of the volcanic disaster, more than 6 thousand people left the island, mainly for the United Kingdom. In recognition of the disaster, in 1998, the people of Montserrat were granted full residency rights in the United Kingdom, allowing them to migrate if they chose. In recognition of the disaster, in 1998, the people of Montserrat were granted full residency rights in the United Kingdom, allowing them to migrate if they chose, and in 2002, the UK granted them British citizenship.

The country is experiencing what can be considered a new cataclysmic event that undermines its existence: its population decline. The reduction in population size in the late 1990s due to the emigration that resulted from the volcanic eruption, the lack of economic opportunities in the country, and the small—or negative—natural population growth that followed have generated stagnation and a later decline in the country's population.

Main demographic trends and challenges¹

Montserrat is on the brink of a catastrophic population crisis. The reduction in population size in the late nineties due to the emigration that resulted from the volcanic eruption and the small—or negative—natural population growth that followed have generated stagnation in the country's population (see Figure 1).

Over the past five years, Montserrat's population has not only stagnated but also begun to decline, primarily due to a persistent decrease in fertility, ongoing emigration, and low immigration. The 2022 Census recorded a total population of 4,386 individuals: 2,189 males and 2,197 females. In the absence of sustained immigration (although the county has been receiving some migrants from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and other Caribbean islands), projections indicate a further decline in the population.

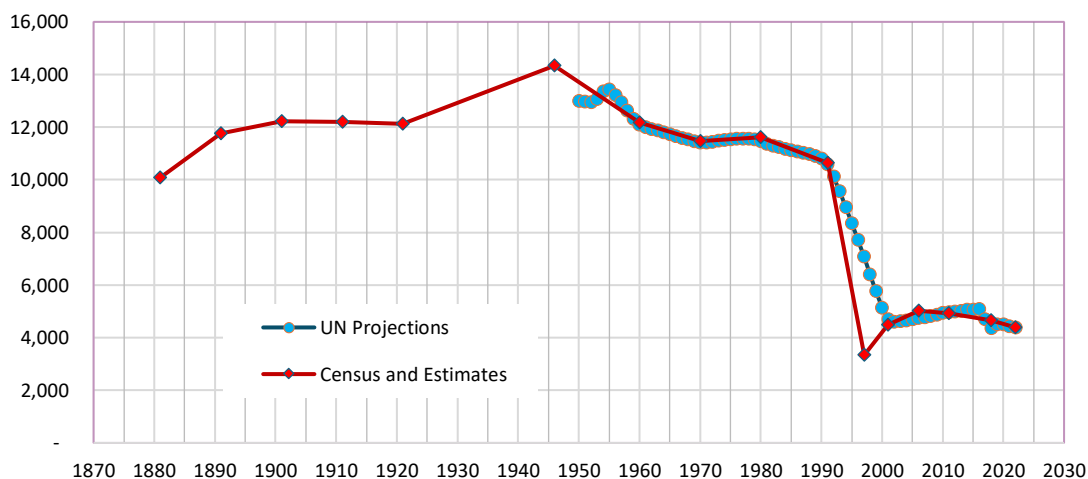
Data from the Statistics Department of Montserrat shows that births fell from 50 in 2020 to 45 in 2021 to 35 in 2022, estimating that only 25 births were born in 2023. Estimates from the United Nations Population Division² show that the total fertility rate (TFR) has been under the level of

¹ This chapter is based on the findings of Population Situation Analysis of Montserrat. (UNFPA, 2024, unpublished)

² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). *World Population Prospects: The 2022 Revision*

replacement of 2.1 children per woman since the beginning of the 90s. Vital statistics show that the TFR for 2018-2022 was 1.6 children per woman. This trend toward lower fertility is exacerbated by the high percentage of the population that never marries or enter in a consensual union). At 30-34, 78 % of women declared themselves as 'single / never married', while in males, this figure was 78 % of all men in these ages.

Figure 1
Montserrat: Mid Year Population , 1881 - 2022



Source: Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, MONTserrat May 2024.
United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). *World Population Prospects: The 2022 Revision*

Life expectancy at birth is estimated for 2023 by the United Nations Population Division at 76.0 years, an increment of 2.4 since 2000, which is lower than the 3.8 years increase in Barbados and the 4.7 years gained in the same period in Latin America and the Caribbean Region. Non-communicable diseases are the leading cause of death. In Montserrat, tackling obesity, especially among adolescents, is critical, with over 25% being overweight, which is higher than in some other Caribbean countries. The health implications are dire, as nearly half of the adult population accessing healthcare has diabetes, 25% have both diabetes and hypertension, and these conditions account for two-thirds of hospital admissions. Poor diet, alcohol consumption, lack of physical activity and smoking (mainly in men) are contributing to the high incidence of non-communicable diseases that are a leading cause of death. Moreover, the diagnosed persons are not necessarily accessing the medical support to manage the diseases.

Emigration is a major factor in Montserrat's demographic changes, with a significant brain drain to countries offering better opportunities. Although there is no good data on emigration, it has been estimated that Montserratians living in the UK, including Montserratian-born immigrants to the UK and their British-born descendants, constitute the second largest number of overseas British citizens living in the UK (after Gibraltarians). The 2011 UK census counted their number as 7,284, almost 50 per cent more than the 4,922 persons living on the island then. Regarding immigration, there are still integration challenges and cultural heritage concerns that the Government want to address. Recent immigration has not resulted from a planning strategy, and there has been little return migration from the diaspora.

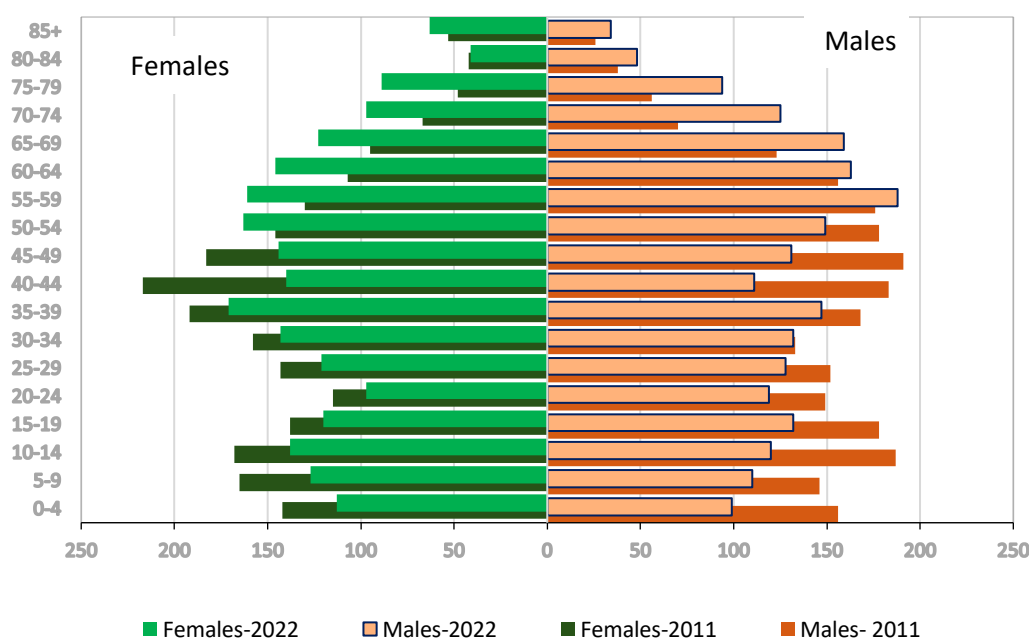
The population age structure is also rapidly changing (Figure 2). Data from the 2022 Census compared with the 2011 Census shows significant changes in both women and men, with a shrinking

younger and working-age population and a growing older population. While the total population decreased by 8% during this period, the population of working ages (15-64) decreased by 12%, and the children 0-14 are 2022 27% less than they were in 2011, which is particularly problematic as this population will replace both the current labour force and the women who will have children. The number of women of reproductive age has already decreased by almost 20%, which is one of the reasons the number of births has declined so quickly and may continue to decline.

On the opposite side, the population of 65 and older increased by 41 % between the two last censuses. This trend poses significant challenges for health and pension systems, which may need adjustments or reforms to adapt to this new trend. Although the population will likely continue ageing, it is difficult to predict population growth and age structure in the coming years due to the country's very low fertility and the unknown trends in international migration. Therefore, planning must incorporate flexible, forward-looking strategies that can accommodate these uncertainties and ensure resilience in the face of demographic changes.

The population of Montserrat is concentrated in the northern region since, in the south, it has been designated as an exclusion zone due to the possibility of another eruption in the future. Household sizes are becoming smaller, and there is a high percentage of single-person and female-headed households, which reflects shifts in family structures and support systems. Data from the 2018 Intercensal Count and Labour Survey shows that living alone increases by age in both sexes and is higher for women with tertiary education (completed or not), at least up to mid-40s.

Figure 2
Montserrat. Population Pyramid: 2011 and 2022 censuses



Policies priorities: Perspectives from national stakeholders

The results of the population situation analysis and the discussions during the consultation process derived a set of main policy recommendations. They are framed under the objectives of reversing population decline, among other things, by increasing migration, including the diaspora and marginalized sectors of the population, and growing and increasing the capacity of the labour force.

Regarding fertility, national stakeholders suggested strategies to encourage childbearing by reducing financial burdens and supporting new mothers, many of whom may consider moving abroad to start a

family due to differences in education standards. Among these strategies, eliminating medical and hospital fees for childbirth, offering tax breaks for families with dependents under 18, and providing practical support to assist new mothers with early childcare responsibilities are included. However, as low birth rates are also the result of young persons of childbearing age migrating, improving the conditions of young people and ensuring they have employment opportunities in the country can also help to increase birth rates.

Regarding migration, to address the trend of a persistent population decline, combined with further ageing, the government representatives suggested investing in rights-based policy actions and focused interventions on international migration by increasing the number of immigrants and returning diaspora Montserratians, which requires creating conditions for attracting and integrating migrant individuals into Montserrat's society and economy, which at the same time will require improving the country's society and economy and establishing holistic integration systems for migrant workers and their families. The government would also consider engaging the diaspora by increasing knowledge exchange and strengthening cultural ties, other crucial aspects of this strategy. During consultations, young people expressed their concerns about the country and their future, including suggestions about the need for a growing population to allow for more diversity, interactions, and innovation challenges. Stakeholders also called for equitable access to services regardless of origin, development of residential tourism to attract retirees, resolution of tourist banking issues, job security for long-term workers, better identification of economic priorities for the island, and data collection to support all these initiatives.

In terms of labour supply, the government has underscored the importance of ensuring a skilled and adequate workforce that supports future projects and investments, such as the hospital and port construction, while boosting the country's support systems, including education, healthcare, and housing, to create a conducive environment for residents and potential migrants. The Ministry of Communication, Works, Energy & Labour has acknowledged concerns about changes in population size, distribution, and composition and their impact on the financial and economic sustainability of the island. More specifically, the Ministry is aware that contractors are facing challenges in sourcing labour, which affects project completion, and there is a shortage of suitably qualified professionals in key positions, as well as a high demand for workers across various sectors. In response, the Labour Department conducts an annual skills training program to match labour supply and demand better and, at the same time, contribute to the retention of trained and skilled workers. Still, the Ministry recognizes that even with more extensive training and development efforts, there is a need to bring new immigrants to meet the island's labour demands.

Finally, stakeholders identified some data issues, such as the need to digitize the vital statistics system, improve the estimation of international migration, develop a more integrated data warehouse, and ensure data privacy.

Links with economic, social, and environmental policies and programmes

Montserrat Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap (SSEEGSR)

The most important policy framework for developing this policy is the SSEEGSR. This roadmap has defined four interconnected goals and twelve outcomes. The goals are shown in Figure 3, and the main outcomes are shown in Figure 4.

This Road Map considers the possible scenarios for the next 5 years:

Scenario 1: Preventing Collapse/Managed Decline. Considers that current demographic trends show a population decline. Therefore, additional investments in this scenario would focus on mandatory projects like implementing the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), critical infrastructure

maintenance, and maintaining current public services such as medical evacuation. This approach is expected to result in a continued population decline.

Figure 3

Main Goals of the Montserrat Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap

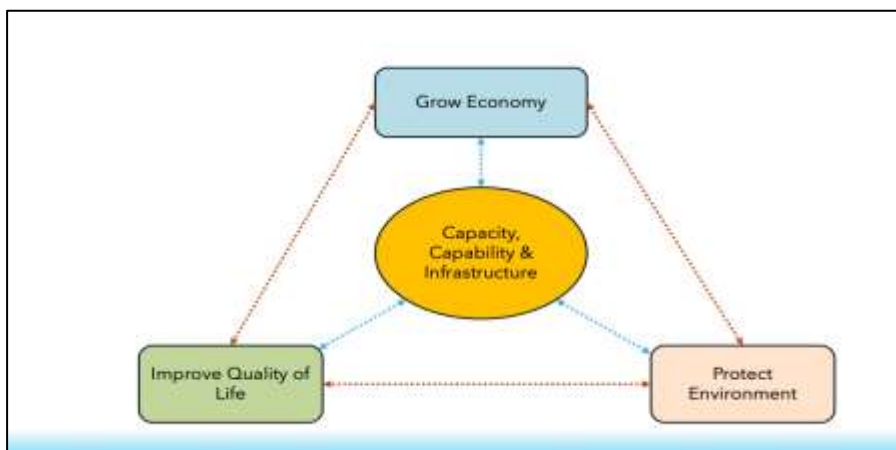


Figure 4

Main Outcomes of the Montserrat Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap (SSEEGSR) and links to SDG.

MAIN OUTCOMES	SDG- Related
Achieve <i>food</i> sovereignty, improved nutrition, sustainable agriculture	2
Ensure <i>healthy</i> lives & wellbeing for all	3
Ensure <i>education</i> provision meets the needs of Montserrat	4
Ensure access to affordable, reliable & sustainable <i>energy</i> for all	7
Achieve sustainable <i>economic growth</i> & productive employment for all	1,5,8,10
Build & maintain capacity, capability & resilient <i>infrastructure</i>	9
Ensure access to adequate, safe & affordable <i>housing</i> and basic services	6,7,11
Ensure sustainable <i>consumption & production</i> patterns (including waste)	12
Reduced risk from & increased <i>resilience to climate change</i> & natural disasters	13
Conserve & sustainably use the <i>natural environment</i>	14,15
Effective & <i>efficient government</i> service	16
Ensure <i>Montserrat's unique identity</i> , community & culture evolved.	11

Scenario 2 - Sustain Population: This scenario includes all projects from Scenario 1, plus further investments to address the population decline, such as improving access and connectivity through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) agreements. Private sector investments coming in then can create jobs which attract people to go to the island, including diaspora.

Scenario 3 - Economic Growth: In addition to the projects in the previous scenarios, this scenario invests in initiatives like establishing a National Tourism Authority to lay the foundation for future economic growth. Attracting private sector investments will be key for economic growth, and scenarios 1 and 2 are the foundations to allow scenario 3.

Scenario 4 – Hybrid Scenario: This is the preferred scenario for the 2024/25 funding and includes all of Scenario 1 (Preventing Collapse) as well as some of the recommended activities from Scenarios 2 (Sustain Population) and 3 (Economic Growth).

In line with this adopted hybrid scenario, the following recommendations for action are proposed in the short to medium term (next 5 years).

- Completing ongoing projects: Includes: a) Developing the Hospital project and planned elements of the health transformation, b) completing the port project, and c) developing Little Bay
- Improving the quality of life: Involves ensuring that: a) There is sufficient social housing; b) Educational provision is improved; c) Food sovereignty and provision of good quality affordable food are guaranteed; d) Social welfare is improved, and e) Delivery of public services is improved, making it more attractive for people to stay on/migrate to the Island, creating a positive cycle of population growth and economic development.
- Increasing the use of renewable energy, which addresses the availability and cost of energy
- Maintaining the infrastructure and equipment
- Ensuring that provision of services to access to the Island is in line with the needs informed by data
- Planning for halting the decline in population and for increasing workforce size, including targeted skills-based immigration
- Creating the environment for private business growth and laying the foundation for future economic growth, including the development of plans for revitalizing tourism to the Island
- Securing funding and seeking funding certainty involve ensuring sufficient resources to deliver the five-year plan by employing external help where needed.

The Montserrat Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap (SSEEGSR) considers that ensuring population growth will be crucial for Montserrat's economic and social development because: a) A higher workforce participation increases economic outputs, b) An increase in government revenue via income tax help to fund public services, c) A better staffing of public service positions is crucial to maintain and improve service coverage and quality; d) A more sustained and expanded private sector business will further stimulate economic growth and government revenue through taxation.

The SSEEGSR also proposes ways to deal with the consequences of demographic change in the country, particularly the ageing population. It proposes a plan for the growing health service needs of older people, improving reproductive health services, particularly C-Section capacities and services, and dealing with the increasing requirements of non-communicable diseases.

The following policies and programmes focus on sectorial plans or policies for specific population groups. The population policy incorporates several of the components and interventions outlined in these policies and plans, all of which are intricately linked to the primary outcomes of this population policy.

The National Policy on Older Persons 2020- 2026³. This policy outlines a comprehensive approach toward enhancing the welfare and rights of older persons, emphasizing the importance of independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment, dignity, and peace in their lives. It sets forth principles against discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, religious belief, disability, or gender, advocating for accessible, affordable, and equitable healthcare, sustainable programs that adapt to the changing needs of older persons, and the protection of their rights, including the right to a safe living environment, freedom from abuse and exploitation, and the safeguarding of their funds and property.

³ Government of Montserrat. Ministry of Health and Social Services (2020). *National Policy on Older Persons 2020-2026* (V.5 Draft). <https://www.gov.ms/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/National-Policy-on-Care-of-Older-Persons-v5.pdf>. Accessed on Jan 23, 2024.

It also includes developing and implementing laws to protect older persons from abuse, violence, and discrimination, with a particular emphasis on safeguarding them from physical and emotional abuse, fraudulent dealings, domestic abuse, and violations related to inheritance and property rights. It also aims to promote positive images of older persons in Montserrat, challenges age discrimination and ensures their rights through specific legal frameworks.

Despite the outlined policy recommendations, more evidence is needed regarding their implementation and evaluation, highlighting a gap between policy formulation and practical application.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) Strategic Plan for 2019-2022⁴. This plan outlines a commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, enhancing service quality to meet international standards, and fostering community development through social safety nets and support for all life stages. It is underpinned by a vision for a 'SMART' Hospital initiative and more robust primary healthcare to break down access barriers and foster a more inclusive health system.

At the heart of Montserrat's health vision is creating a resilient and high-quality system that empowers citizens to manage their health effectively, ensuring prompt and easy access to affordable care. The MoHSS's commitment to primary healthcare, underlined by core values of ethics, equity, and solidarity, views health access as a fundamental human right.

This approach aims to build partnerships and promote ethical practices in healthcare provision, aspiring to provide all individuals, regardless of socio-economic status, with an essential package of quality health services. This vision aligns with the national agenda, focusing on resilience, quality, and empowerment in health and wellness for the entire Montserrat community.

The Disability⁵ and Inclusion in Montserrat: Policy Discussions⁶

Although Montserrat has not yet agreed on a national policy on disability, national organizations and institutions are working in that policy analysis and recommendations⁷⁸. Continuous actions to develop new policies are needed to ensure equality. The UK expects its Overseas Territories (OTs) to comply with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which must be the north star guiding Montserrat's new disability policy and other international standards, including ILO conventions promoting inclusive employment for people with disabilities, though implementation has been inconsistent.

While Montserrat has a framework for disability rights, including the Labour Code, the OECS Building Code, and international agreements, enforcement and compliance have been lacking. The Labour

⁴ See: <https://www.gov.ms/government/ministries/ministry-of-health-and-social-services/#:~:text=In%20the%20MoHSS%20Strategic%20Plan,equitable%20and%20efficient%20for%20Montserrat.>

⁵ See definition of what a disabled person is in the Annex.

⁶ Disability and Inclusion in Employment: A Route Map for Montserrat. ILO, 2023

⁷ The policy draft establishes their vision as a community where individuals with disabilities enjoy the full spectrum of rights and privileges that citizens and residents without disabilities. This policy is grounded in the social model of disability and the core principles of human rights. The guiding values shaping this policy's formulation and application are Equity, Inclusion, Independence, Anti-discrimination, Respect, Partnership, Rights, and Access.

Ministry of Health and Social Services (2024). National Policy on Disability 2024-2034. Government of Montserrat (Draft)

⁸ In 2019-2022 FCDO Financial Aid Business Case emphasizes that government services in Montserrat should focus on the most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, and adopt best practices for disability-friendly infrastructure. The Montserrat Labour Code (2012) establish equality in employment, prohibiting dismissal based on disability and requiring employers to make reasonable accommodations. The OECS Building Code (2016) and CROSQ standards mandate accessibility compliance for buildings across CARICOM states. The Montserrat Constitution ensures non-discriminatory access to public places. International agreements, including the EU Overseas Association Decision, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Sustainable Development Goals, advocate for the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities (Source: [Craig Brewin's blog](#)).

Code prohibits dismissal based on disability and requires reasonable accommodations, yet these regulations remain unenforced. Similarly, provisions in cooperation agreements with the EU and the British government for disability support have not been realized. Under the current UK law, disability is considered more of a welfare policy issue than a human rights matter. Consequently, gaps in implementation persist, requiring the government to take more active steps to ensure genuine inclusion and meet its obligations by recognizing and implementing these established standards to ensure genuine disability inclusion.

[The Montserrat National Sports and Recreation Policy \(2021-2030\)](#)⁹

It emphasizes increasing accessibility to sports for all segments of society, enhancing gender equality, and upgrading village-based infrastructure. It aims to systematically develop high-performance athletes through a High-Performance Institute and a professional athletes' program, ensuring financial and medical support.

The policy mandates safeguarding training for adults involved in youth sports and promotes inclusivity for older people and people with disabilities. It integrates sports with educational advancement by developing formal partnerships for scholarships and a comprehensive school sports curriculum. It integrates sports with educational advancement by developing formal partnerships for scholarships and a comprehensive school sports curriculum.

Additionally, the policy focuses on economic development through sports tourism by enhancing infrastructure to host regional and international events and fostering public/private partnerships to fund sports initiatives.

Legislative and policy environment – international, regional, and local

The development of national population policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in countries from other regions, has been significantly influenced by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the ICPD framework has guided the creation and revision of population policies to focus on demographic factors like fertility and mortality rates, migration and improving the quality of life through comprehensive healthcare, education, and women's empowerment. Many countries in the region have integrated these broader social and economic dimensions into their national agendas, recognizing that population dynamics are a central component of the ICPD and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the Caribbean, small island developing states have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of unique challenges. These include vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, which are directly tied to population management and sustainable development. Regional cooperation has emerged as a powerful tool in addressing population issues. Organizations like the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the UNFPA have played significant roles in facilitating dialogue, sharing best practices, and supporting national and regional projects.

Overall, the legacy of the ICPD in Latin America and the Caribbean is evident in how population policies have evolved to encompass a broader perspective on human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development, recognizing the complex interdependencies between population dynamics and broader economic, environmental, and social goals. In the last five years, Jamaica, Dominica, Belize, and Suriname have developed national population policies focusing on population and environmental vulnerability.

⁹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Government of Montserrat. https://www.gov.ms/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Sports-Policy_PublicConsultation_Draft_2020.pdf

III. VISION STATEMENT

The strategic vision in this Population Policy for Montserrat centres on a prosperous and resilient island with a vibrant economy, with conditions that attract residents and visitors and migrants alike, and that build progressively a healthy and equitable society, a strong economy and a population large and skilled enough to meet the requirements of delivering on the goals and outcomes of the SSEEGSR, in agreement with the ICPD Programme of Action and aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

IV. OVERALL GOAL

Through rights-based and gender-responsive policies, to ensure the alignment between the demographic aspirations of Montserratians and economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social equity by managing and inducing improvements in the social and economic conditions that influence population change, including size, composition, and distribution, aiming at reaching an agreement with country's defined targets.

V. PRINCIPLES

The policy framework presented is based on the following principles:

- Upholding human rights, including the choice of family size and access to preferred contraceptive methods
- Promoting gender equity throughout all stages of life
- Fostering inclusive development that encourages the participation of all citizens.
- Empowering individuals as the cornerstone of building a resilient society
- Managing natural resources sustainably to ensure their availability for present and future generations and to enhance resilience across natural, built, social, cultural, and economic domains
- Making evidence-based decisions in the planning, execution, and monitoring of policies
- Ensuring transparency and accountability in all governmental proceedings
- Affirming Montserrat's right to design and enforce national migration policies in alignment with international law, as endorsed by the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018).

VI. POLICY OUTCOMES

The three proposed policy outcomes are detailed below (Figure 3) and are in sync with the strategic actions of the Montserrat Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap. These outcomes have been defined considering the need for the island to become an attractive place to live and work, offering better economic prospects, a sufficient workforce to support the economy, and reasonable access to infrastructure, housing, and services. They are the following:

Policy Outcome I: The quality of life improves, and human capital investment is increased to generate the skills needed to match the market needs of the island, therefore the country becomes more attractive for current residents, particularly young people, to stay in and immigrants, including the diaspora, to come (Retention).

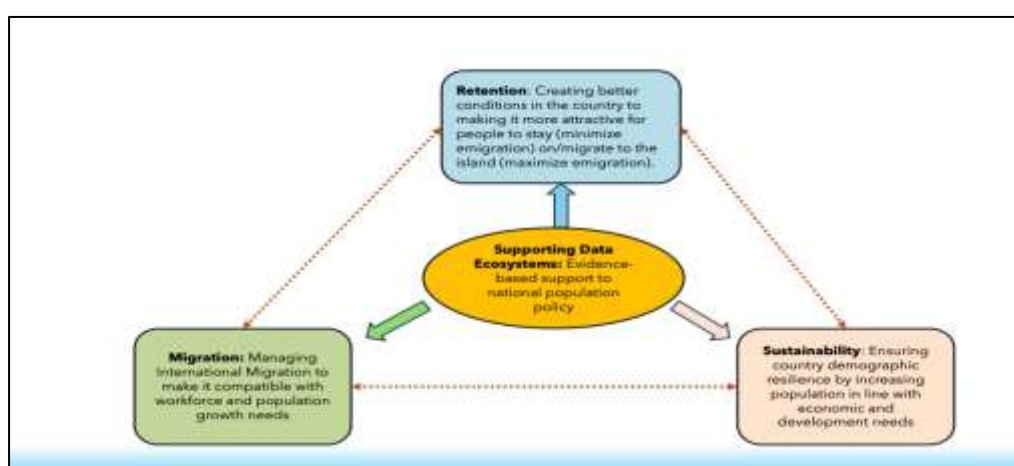
Policy Outcome II: International migration (both emigration and immigration -new migrants and diaspora) is integrally managed by national authorities and becomes more compatible with workforce and population growth needs (Migration).

Policy Outcome III: Demographic resilience is central to the national strategy to attain economic growth, social equity, and environmental resilience (Sustainability).

Policy Outcome IV: An integrated data ecosystem is developed and maintained for implementing and monitoring the Population Policy.

The Government of Montserrat (GoM) plans to invest in economic development, requiring skilled individuals to implement projects and services that are unavailable now. The strategy behind the policy outcomes is to retain the youth and working-age population, attract the Montserratian diaspora to return, and bring foreign workers. To make this possible, demographic resilience must be integrated into the policy framework to ensure the country's sustainability. Each outcome of the population policy will contribute to one or more goals and outcomes of the Montserrat Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap.

Figure 3
Focus area for the Montserrat Population Policy and Action Plan (MPP).



VII. POLICY OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

POLICY OUTCOME I: THE QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVES, AND HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT IS INCREASED TO GENERATE THE SKILLS NEEDED TO MATCH THE MARKET NEEDS OF THE ISLAND, THEREFORE THE COUNTRY

BECOMES MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR CURRENT RESIDENTS, PARTICULARLY YOUNG PEOPLE, TO STAY IN AND IMMIGRANTS, INCLUDING THE DIASPORA, TO COME (RETENTION).

The policy aims to retain the population by making Montserrat more attractive for current residents and potential migrants by making significant investments in human capital, focusing on health and well-being, education, and new skills in the labour force. For health and well-being, the policy proposes improving nutrition for children, adolescents, and mothers, developing activities to keep all age groups active and ensuring affordable access to reproductive health products. It also includes recreational activities, and places may be added where people can meet and socialize i.e. cinema or a town square with benches as a meeting point. Education emphasizes adapting tertiary education to meet labour market needs, diversifying vocational education, and ensuring transparency in scholarship awards. Ensuring that people remain in the country and promoting people to come requires the creation of conditions for people to have adequate access to the services they need, decent employment, and live in a safe, healthy, and productive environment. Tapping into the potential of those often excluded – women, older people, youth, migrants, minorities, and other marginalized groups – will foster their inclusion in the workforce and society at large with positive repercussions in economic growth.

Policy Objective 1.1: Strengthen human capital by a) investing in young people, including education health, b) enhancing and diversify the skills of the labour force, and c) by improving social and economic participation of people with disability.

Investing in Montserrat's youth human capital through strategies such as improving nutrition, improving quality education, tailoring it to labour market demands, and addressing social challenges is crucial for retaining young talent and promoting sustainable development. This approach enhances job prospects and quality of life, making it more appealing for the younger generation to stay on the island. At the same time, improving the social and economic participation of people with disabilities is crucial for enhancing human capital in Montserrat.

By implementing inclusive education and human resource strategies, promoting equal rights and opportunities, and combating stigma and discrimination, Montserrat can tap into a previously underutilized segment of its workforce while increasing support to civil society organizations to help build a more resilient community. Collaborating with business partners to promote employment for people with disabilities helps to strengthen the island's economic and social fabric.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- a) Invest in young people's human capital to improve productivity increase and retention of young people by:
 - Invest in education to ensure access to high-quality education that can rival standards in the UK and the US, making Montserrat an attractive option for both current residents and returning diaspora members, by considering the following specific interventions:
 - Aligning tertiary education and vocational training with both public and private sector demands, addressing the social barriers affecting youth access to higher education (SSEEGSR- Outcome 3).
 - Update educational curricula to match local labour market needs, ensuring young people acquire skills in high-demand areas such as digital literacy, green technologies, and healthcare.
 - Building the necessary infrastructure to support digital education and online learning, will enable access to a broader range of educational resources and opportunities.

- Involving the diaspora in the education system, particularly those in the UK, by leveraging their expertise in key sectors such as technology, healthcare, education, and business, and establishing remote learning opportunities, guest lectures, and exchange programs between diaspora members and local institutions to foster knowledge and skills transfer.
 - Positioning Montserrat as a thriving environment offering comparable academic and career prospects for returning families to encourage return migration of high-skilled individuals.
 - Creating partnerships with universities and educational institutions in the UK and US to enhance learning exchanges, curriculum development, and innovation within Montserrat's education system.
 - Implement policies to ensure tailored support throughout schooling for individuals with special educational needs, particularly those facing learning difficulties. This will equip them with the necessary skills and resources to enhance employability, access job opportunities on the island, and reduce dependence on welfare.
 - Enhancing transparency in the scholarship award process for students studying abroad and ensure that returning graduates are placed in roles that match their skills and qualifications. (SSEEGSR - Outcome 2).
 - Ensuring graduates that go abroad to study are appropriately placed in jobs that match their skills when they come back (SSEEGSR-Outcome 2).
 - Promote the full adoption and implementation of the CSME Skills Certificate programme to attract persons to Montserrat.
 - Align education with market needs and skills development by:
 - Conducting a skills mapping exercise to identify labour force gaps and ensure education meets market demands. (SSEEGSR - Outcome 3, 5).
 - Developing mentoring programs to build skills in high-demand sectors. (SSEEGSR - Outcome 5).
 - Improve health and social development for youth by:
 - Improving nutrition for children, adolescents, and mothers to support healthy development and learning outcomes. (SSEEGSR - Outcome 1, 2).
 - Creating diverse activities for youth, such as sports competitions and virtual STEM sessions, to foster growth and learning. (SSEEGSR - Outcome 2).
 - Develop youth wellness programs focusing on mental health and counselling.
 - Foster global exposure and technological innovation by:
 - Increasing exchanges with young people from the diaspora and other countries on emerging technologies like AI (SSEEGSR - Outcome 3).
 - Developing partnerships with the UK in sectors like music festivals, tourism, and others to promote cultural and economic exchanges.
 - Promote the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage. (SSEEGSR - Outcome 12) by:
 - Engaging diaspora youth in cultural exchange, mentorship, and volunteering programs to strengthen their connection to Montserrat and support its cultural heritage's global promotion and preservation.
 - Developing partnerships with the UK in areas such as music festivals, tourism, and other sectors to enhance cultural exchange and community building.
- b) Enhance and diversifying the skills of the labour force by:
- Reinforcing the Labour Department's annual skills training by ensuring that a wide range of lifelong learning programs is available throughout the year to help workers continually upgrade their skills and stay relevant.
 - Developing reskilling programs for mid-career professionals, including those in the diaspora, offers pathways to transition into high-demand sectors and aligns with Montserrat's job opportunities.
- c) Government employees, including members of the diaspora, are given short-term attachments to further develop their skills and broaden their knowledge of how to apply new and different programs in the national development strategy.

- d) Improve social and economic participation of people with disability by:
- Promoting Inclusive Education and Workforce Development:
 - Developing human resources and inclusive education strategies that provide access to education, vocational training, and technology for persons with disabilities to improve employability (SSEEGSR-Outcome 3).
 - Establishing legislation that links the education system with the labour market to promote the employability of persons with disabilities.
 - Broadening existing policies to encompass both physical disabilities and neurodiversity, providing tailored support and specialized services for conditions like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia to ensure equal access to education, employment, and community life.
 - Ensuring accessible health and rehabilitation services:
 - Implementing programs to make healthcare and rehabilitation services accessible to enable persons with disabilities to achieve and maintain maximum independence.
 - Raising awareness and combat discrimination:
 - Promoting rights, equal treatment, and opportunities for persons with disabilities by combating stigma and stereotypes.
 - Ensuring that legal frameworks supporting equal rights and non-discrimination are entirely in place and aligned with international standards.
 - Adopting a human rights-based approach in all policies and programs and providing regular awareness training.
 - Promoting social inclusion through cultural, sports, and recreational activities (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Improving accessibility in the built environment:
 - Educating the public about the accommodation provisions in the Montserrat Building Code.
 - Ensuring that all new buildings meet international accessibility standards.
 - Strengthening legislation and human resource management:
 - Ensuring government guidelines, such as the General Orders and Public Service Administration Act Cap No. 12 of 20, address disability issues in human resource management.
 - Promoting active participation and inclusion in decision-making:
 - Engaging persons with disabilities in the development and implementation of legislation, policies, and programs, to ensure their perspectives are considered in all relevant decisions.
 - Formalizing relationships between civil society and government to ensure continuous representation in decision-making processes.
 - Supporting employment and workplace inclusion:
 - Facilitating the recruitment, retention, and career development of employees with disabilities through training and development opportunities (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Ensuring equal opportunities and accessibility in the workplace by removing barriers and making communication tools and procedures accessible (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Encouraging social dialogue among employers, trade unions, and government agencies to promote decent work conditions and legal protection for persons with disabilities.
 - Ensuring Fair Treatment in Employment Transitions:
 - Review the medical boarding process to ensure equitable treatment for employees who become disabled and explore all reasonable accommodations before considering early retirement.
 - Enhancing civil society and advocacy efforts:
 - Increase support for civil society organizations working with or advocating for persons with disabilities to aid inclusive policy development and employment initiatives (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Collaborating with business partners for inclusive practices:

- Work with businesses to promote inclusive employment practices, such as accessible recruitment, reasonable accommodations, and targeted vocational training (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
- Promoting public awareness and cultural change:
 - Raising awareness about the contributions of persons with disabilities through campaigns and educational programs to foster an inclusive culture in the workplace and society.
 - Monitoring and protecting persons with disabilities from mistreatment in all settings, including healthcare and the workplace.
- Aligning policies with international best practices:
 - Aligning policies with international conventions and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to build inclusive and sustainable societies.

Policy Objective 1.2: Improve social and economic conditions and access to services to make the country more attractive to stay or to come.

The strategic actions outlined here will be essential for enhancing the social and economic conditions of the country, making it an attractive place to live and encouraging both retention and attraction of residents. Improving adult health through better dietary habits, healthcare services, and access to medicines tackles prevalent health issues like obesity, diabetes, and hypertension, directly enhancing the quality of life and workforce productivity. Similarly, increasing social protection reduces poverty, provides security for older people, and creates more job opportunities, fostering a more inclusive and supportive community. Addressing environmental fragility through safer living conditions and improved environmental safety contributes to a healthier, more sustainable environment.

Finally, enhancing connectedness with the broader world through continuous ferry services and virtual communication hubs opens new economic opportunities and deeply integrates the country into regional networks. These measures collectively help to create a vibrant and prosperous society that retains its citizens and attracts newcomers.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- a) Create better educational opportunities and conditions in Montserrat to promote a phased return of the diaspora as part of a national migration policy that focuses on:
 - Enhancing quality of education and curriculum development: modernize curricula to reflect global trends and local need and invest in teacher training for up-to-date skills, inclusive education, and technology integration.
 - Improving education infrastructure and technology: upgrade school facilities and incorporate technology to support modern, safe, and accessible learning environments, enabling both in-class and remote education.
 - Aligning education with local economic opportunities: develop educational programs, vocational training, and career pathways that match Montserrat's labour market needs, ensuring students gain practical skills relevant to key economic sectors.
 - Highlighting the availability of high-quality education and professional opportunities on the island to encourage return migration of high-skilled individuals.
 - Engaging diaspora and community in education initiatives: create programs to involve the diaspora as mentors or educators through incentives and include community input in education policy decisions to ensure policies reflect local and returning families' needs.
 - Ensuring the resettlement in Montserrat of persons in the diaspora who went to the UK for educational purposes.
 - Leveraging UK and international support for local programs: collaborate with UK and global partners to bring resources, funding, and educational programs to Montserrat, offering opportunities equivalent to international standards without the needing travel.

- b) Improve women and men adult health, by:
- Promoting healthy diets and monitoring imports of unhealthy foods (SSEEGSR-Outcome 1).
 - Ensuring continuous food availability in the territory.
 - Investing in health prevention, emphasizing known measures to reduce and control obesity and diabetes (SSEEGSR-Outcome 1).
 - Improving Women and men Adult Health
 - Enhancing the availability of national capacities to provide better health care services by facilitating regular training of health staff (diabetes (SSEEGSR-Outcome 1 and 2)). This can significantly improve the overall health system and ensure better health outcomes for the population.
 - Engaging diaspora healthcare professionals in remote consultations, medical training, and telemedicine services, helping elevate local health standards. Create a Diaspora Health Network to enable regular visits and virtual assistance from doctors, nurses, and specialists abroad.
 - Improving access to medicines for diabetes, hypertension, and other NCDs (SSEEGSR-Outcome 2).
 - Developing education and sensitization activities on the aetiology and treatment of NCDs.
 - Increasing access to essential and specialized medical services through leveraging technology, direct service provision and telemedicine (SSEEGSR-Outcome 2).
 - Ensuring people with disabilities, whether from NCDs or other causes, can access appropriate care.
- c) Improve social protection coverage and quality by:
- Advocating for gender-equitable policies in all areas of social support, promoting inclusive access to services, financial security, and pathways for education and economic empowerment
 - Implementing focused actions to reduce poverty and ensuring nobody is left behind (SSEEGSR-Outcome 2 and 5).
 - Guaranteeing a minimum income for older people in situations of poverty by establishing a social pension for those who are not working or have a pension (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Increasing employment opportunities for older persons by eliminating the age for mandatory retirement (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Creating and maintaining older people's homes for those older people left behind.
 - Introducing a "Retire in Montserrat" programme, by:
 - Offering incentives like tax breaks, real estate packages, and access to quality healthcare to attract diaspora retirees accustomed to higher living standards.
 - Establishing a retirement village with modern amenities and services can further encourage relocation.
 - Creating a Diaspora Mentorship Program can invite retired diaspora professionals to return and support local entrepreneurs and young professionals.
- e) Reducing the country's environmental fragility by:
- Reduced risk and increased resilience to climate change and natural disasters are mainstreamed into all infrastructure projects by creating legal standards for sustainable building practices and infrastructure development that is resilient to environmental hazards (SSEEGSR-Outcome 9).
 - Improving environmental safety through:
 - Developing general and school-focused campaigns.
 - Regularly updating disaster response plans.
 - Conducting community-wide drills to ensure everyone knows the evacuation procedures and safety protocols. (SSEEGSR-Outcome 9).
 - Increasing access to safe and affordable housing, ensuring new houses are built using concrete and other appropriate construction materials (SSEEGSR-Outcome 7).
- f) Improve connectedness with the outside world, by:

- Opening the Harbour, with fit-for-purpose and affordable transportation access to Antigua and other islands, ensures continuous service that meets the needs of Montserrat's population, with consideration for changing demographics (SSEEGSR-Outcome 6).
- Creating virtual communication Hubs with other Caribbean countries (SSEEGSR-Outcome 6).
- Increasing national Internet bandwidth.
- Developing a digital platform for the diaspora to offer easy access to essential government services like pension applications, property investment, healthcare, and citizenship or residency processes, simplifying the return and investment process (SSEEGSR-Outcome 6).
- Enhancing internet infrastructure and bandwidth will encourage virtual communication and partnerships, improve remote work capabilities for diaspora members, foster global professional networks, and facilitate investments that contribute to Montserrat's economic development.

Policy Objective 1.3: Introduce regulatory changes to improve ease of doing business.

To address Montserrat's ongoing economic challenges and demographic vulnerabilities, it is essential to implement strategic interventions to foster a business-friendly environment that attracts investments and promotes economic growth. One of the critical components of the national population policy is introducing regulatory changes to improve the ease of doing business. By setting standards in vital sectors such as food processing and food and beverage, adapting regulations to attract investments, and supporting product exports, Montserrat can create a conducive environment for both local and foreign businesses. These interventions are designed to stimulate economic activities, diversify income sources, and ultimately enhance the population's quality of life, which will help strengthen the island's demographic and financial resilience.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- a) Set standards in key sectors (e.g., food processing, food and beverage) by:
 - Developing and implement industry-specific guidelines for food safety and quality.
 - Conducting training workshops for local businesses on compliance with new standards.
 - Establishing a certification program for businesses that meet sector standards.
- b) Adapt regulations to attract investment, and support product exports by:
 - Simplifying the licensing process for new businesses in export-oriented sectors.
 - Providing tax incentives for companies investing in export infrastructure.
 - Reviewing and update export documentation requirements to streamline processes.

Policy Objective 1.4: Introduce regulatory changes to stimulate job creation and retain workers.

Stimulating job creation is crucial for Montserrat's Population Policy to attract and retain workers, reversing demographic decline and fostering growth. Establishing a labour market task force helps align workforce initiatives with economic needs. Partnering with training institutions equips residents with skills for current and future markets. Public-private partnerships for internships and apprenticeships provide valuable experience for graduates and returning diaspora. Marketing campaigns to the diaspora highlight new opportunities, encouraging skilled individuals to return. These efforts aim to enhance workforce capabilities and create a sustainable economic environment supporting growth and well-being.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- a) Establish a Labour Market Task Force to Identify Key Sectors for Growth and Address Skills Gaps by
 - Conducting Sector-Specific Consultations: Engage stakeholders across government, private sector, and key industries to identify growth sectors and assess labour market needs.
 - Labour Market Survey and Data Analysis: Conduct comprehensive labour market surveys and analyze data to determine current and future skills gaps, enabling targeted policy development.

- b) Partnering with Training Institutions to Develop Targeted Skills Programs for Current and Future Market Needs
 - Curriculum Development with Industry Input: Collaborate with training institutions and industry leaders to create programs aligned with identified key sectors, focusing on relevant technical and soft skills.
 - Scholarship and Incentive Programs: Introduce scholarships or incentives for students and workers to enrol in these targeted programs, ensuring alignment with market needs.
- c) Developing Public-Private Partnerships to Create Internship, Apprenticeship, and Job Placement Programs for Recent Graduates and Returning Diaspora Members
 - Establishing Formal Agreements with Businesses: Develop agreements with local and regional businesses to provide structured internship and apprenticeship opportunities to graduates and diaspora returnees.
 - Job Placement Fairs and Networking Events: Organize regular job placement fairs and networking events where graduates and diaspora returnees can meet potential employers and learn about internship or apprenticeship openings.
- d) Launch Marketing Campaigns Aimed at the Diaspora to Highlight New Job Opportunities and Encourage Return by:
 - Leveraging Digital Platforms for Outreach: Create a digital marketing campaign using social media, email newsletters, and diaspora networks to share stories of growth, opportunity, and quality of life in Montserrat.
 - Diaspora Roadshows and Information Sessions: Conducting roadshows in cities with significant diaspora populations, showcasing job opportunities, economic developments, and the benefits of returning to Montserrat.

POLICY OUTCOME 2: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION (BOTH EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION -NEW MIGRANTS AND DIASPORA) IS INTEGRALLY MANAGED BY NATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND BECOMES MORE COMPATIBLE WITH WORKFORCE AND POPULATION GROWTH NEEDS (MIGRATION).

Policy Objective 2.1: Manage immigration through well-structured policy and plans in the context of safe, orderly, and regular migration in line with new economic investments. This includes determining the number of migrants needed and their skills, language, and other characteristics each year based on a continuous evaluation of needs and gaps in the national labour force.

This policy objective refers to critical interventions needed to manage international migration to align it with workforce and population growth needs through a comprehensive rights-based migration policy, including a ten-year plan that details workforce needs and matches them with economic growth plans. It proposes mechanisms to attract migrants, such as fast-track residency permits and integration services, and initiatives to engage the Montserratian diaspora, including financial incentives and development investment opportunities. Matching employment opportunities with the workforce's needs and developing mentoring programs to build skills in high-demand sectors will revitalize the economy and create new jobs.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- a) Develop and implement a ten-year skills-based and rights-based immigration plan that defines the workforce needs and matches them with economic plans and population growth targets by:
 - In coordination with the private sector and civil society, a labour force needs assessment and projection model will be prepared to define current and future skilled and non-skilled labour requirements for economic, social, and environmental projects in line with population growth targets. This model will estimate labour needs and gaps, guiding efforts to attract necessary migrants.
 - Defining the number, skills, language, and other characteristics of immigrants needed each year based on a continuous evaluation of the national labour force.

- b) Develop a comprehensive set of migration policy recommendations focused on balancing labour force needs with demographic sustainability and long-term integration by developing and implementing a ten-year skills- and rights-based immigration plan that aligns workforce needs with economic plans and population growth targets.
- Developing a targeted migration strategy by creating a plan to attract workers from other countries, focusing on orderly and secure migration through mechanisms like fast-track residency permits and integration services (SSEEGSR-Outcome 11).
 - Creating streamlined pathways for skilled migrants, focusing on critical sectors (e.g., healthcare, technology) and retention incentives like fast-track permanent residency.
 - Stabilizing migrant workers's flow through secure agreements by offering contracts for more than one year to ensure job stability and the ability to invest in Montserrat (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Integrating the more closely and efficiently the diaspora to Montserrat's Economic and Social Development.
 - Aligning housing infrastructure with migration and diaspora return goals by prioritizing affordable housing schemes for young families and returnees. Offer diaspora-specific mortgage products or real estate investment incentives to attract Montserratians abroad, especially from the UK (SSEEGSR-Outcome 7).
 - Developing interventions involving residents and those from the diaspora the diaspora, aimed at:
 - Encouraging talent and creativity in critical sectors through innovative models like hybrid, remote working, and targeted consultancy, particularly focusing on attracting skilled individuals from the diaspora (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Increasing connectivity through technology improvements, such as enhancing national internet bandwidth and creating virtual communication hubs with other Caribbean countries, would support the ability of diaspora members to work remotely and maintain global networks (SSEEGSR-Outcome 6).
 - Developing focused interventions with the diaspora aimed at:
 - Establishing a Diaspora Skills Database to map the talents and expertise of Montserratians abroad, facilitating flexible work opportunities such as remote consultancy in high-demand areas like technology, healthcare, and education (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Enhancing diaspora engagement through financial incentives and investment opportunities, including introducing diaspora bonds or tax relief schemes for key sectors like tourism, renewable energy, and housing. Create a diaspora investment forum, particularly in the UK, to foster economic ties and contributions (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
 - Involving Diaspora with specific national projects and facilitating their investments
 - Facilitating partnerships between local businesses and migrant communities to create employment opportunities and build diverse networks.
 - Developing a dedicated digital platform for the diaspora to access essential services like pension applications, property investment, healthcare, and citizenship processes, simplifying their return and investment processes and enhancing connectedness (SSEEGSR-Outcome 6).
 - Creating spaces for residential tourism and attracting diaspora retirees, focusing on offering incentives such as long-term visas and the opportunity to contribute through mentoring and community involvement (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).

Policy Objective 2.2: Develop and implement strategies for integrating the Montserrat diaspora and other interested investors more closely and efficiently into the country's economic plans and facilitate return migration.

To strengthen ties with the Montserratian diaspora and other interested investors, the strategic actions proposed include offering attractive investment options, encouraging returns with a comprehensive package of solutions, improving electricity and internet reliability to attract investors

and remote workers, and engaging the new generation of the diaspora through capacity mapping and exchanges with local youth. These initiatives aim to build a more connected and robust Montserratian community globally and locally.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- Creating an enabling environment to attract Diaspora investments by eliminating unnecessary red tape, offering tax breaks and incentives, and fostering entrepreneurship, business development, innovation, and direct investment in priority sectors (SSEEGSR—Outcome 5).
- Promoting residential tourism by leveraging the island's safety, peace, and services to attract longer stays. Establish retirement communities with long-stay visas and partnerships with healthcare providers to appeal to diaspora retirees who want to maintain access to quality services while living in Montserrat (SSEEGSR-Outcome 5).
- Creating an enabling environment to attract private sector investments in general
- Devising special programs to connect youth in the Diaspora with local youth, promote citizenship initiatives for second to fourth-generation Diaspora members, develop Public-Private Partnerships for mentorship, and increase festivals and events to promote Montserrat's cultural heritage.
- Create incentive programme to encourage Montserratians who have emigrated from the island e.g. by offering, among other things, their incentives for housing options (SSEEGSR—Outcome 5).
- Resolving issues around the reliability of electricity and internet connectivity to encourage investors/potential remote workers (SSEEGSR- Outcome 6).
- Facilitate engagement of new generations of Montserratian's in the Diaspora by mapping their skills and expertise. (SSEEGSR- Outcome 12).
- Strengthen mechanisms to facilitate diaspora charitable donations to schools, hospitals, and other institutions.
- Encourage collaboration between UK-based social justice organizations, women's rights advocates, and community activists with Montserrat's social development agenda. This partnership can support advocacy, programs, and initiatives that uplift marginalized groups, fostering inclusivity and contributing to the island's social progress.

Policy Objective 2.3: Improve migrants' integration in the country and minimize the difference between the type of number of benefits they receive related to Montserratians.

This policy objective promotes migrant integration by removing service fee disparities, implementing social cohesion initiatives, and designing gender-sensitive integration services to ensure successful adaptation and contribution to Montserrat's society as an embracing society fully committed to fairness and inclusivity.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- Creating more rounded/holistic systems for integrating migrant workers and their families, including language classes for non-English speakers to eliminate language barriers (SSEEGSR—Outcome3).
- Removing disparities in service fees, as health service fees to patients are based on nationality (SSEEGSR- Outcome2).
- Implementing social cohesion initiatives such as fairs and celebrating a culture integration day dedicated to embracing diversity and cultural richness (SSEEGSR-Outcome12).
- Improving the well-being and knowledge of migrants through established training, sensitization, employment, and social assistance programmes.
- Establish an "Immigrant Welcome and Integration Office" to provide language training, cultural orientation, and support services to help newcomers integrate into local communities.

POLICY OUTCOME 3: DEMOGRAPHIC RESILIENCE IS CENTRAL TO THE NATIONAL STRATEGY TO ATTAIN ECONOMIC GROWTH, SOCIAL EQUITY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE (SUSTAINABILITY).

Sustainability and demographic resilience are also pivotal, with interventions to create a more enabling context for family formation, fertility, and reproduction by designing and implementing gender-friendly labour policies, strengthening and broadening reproductive health services, ensuring gender equity, providing support and incentives for childbearing, and ensuring care support for new mothers who are single-parent families are among the proposed measures. Additionally, the policy addresses managing challenges from demographic changes, such as the ageing population, by improving health services, promoting active participation and economic involvement post-retirement and ensuring adequate housing and support for older adults.

This outcome includes two main policy objectives:

Policy Objective 3.1: Create a more enabling context for family formation, fertility, and reproduction.

Several strategic actions are proposed below to enhance family formation, fertility, and reproduction within the framework of empowering women and couples with the right to choose the number, timing and spacing of the children they want. These include a) Increasing gender-friendly and pro-family support programs, reviewing and adjusting work policies for women, and developing positive communication about parenthood; b) Counselling for treating infertility and improving access to reproductive health services; d) Financial relief through tax breaks and removal of medical fees for childbirth, better working conditions for mothers, and ensuring access to housing for new families are also key objectives. Finally, this policy proposes expanding early childhood education programs and creating mechanisms to help young people transition to working life, with tax incentives to support young families. By mirroring the benefits experienced by Montserratians in the UK—like maternity leave, tax breaks, and affordable childcare—Montserrat could become a more attractive place for diaspora members to return, invest, or settle through measures like flexible working policies and tax relief for families.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- a) Develop pro-family support Initiatives by:
- Increasing pro-family socio-economic support initiatives and programs, including childcare expansion, aiming at reaching universal coverage of early childhood education programs to develop children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs.
 - Ensuring maternity/parental leave) for couples and women who have children, with emphasis on single-parent families (SSEEGSR- Outcome2), by providing:
 - Financial counselling, microcredit access, and skill-building for employment.
 - Comprehensive support for new mothers, ensuring access to low-cost and good-quality baby products, clothing, and healthy eating.
 - Offering tax breaks for families with dependents under 18 and giving incentives at the community level for providing practical assistance like housekeeping services to help with early childcare responsibilities (SSEEGSR- Outcome 5).
 - Ensuring newly created families have access to safe and affordable housing (SSEEGSR- Outcome7).
 - Creating communication interventions that include promoting fertility and positive images of parenthood through targeted communication strategies, including topics such as involving of men in family dynamics, influencing changes in gender stereotypes, attitudes, behaviours, and

roles of their male counterparts, preventing domestic violence, and integrating family formation education in high schools (SSEEGSR- Outcome 12, 3).

- b) Implement flexible working policies for women with children by:
 - Reviewing and adjusting current working policies to ensure flexible working arrangements around childbirth. This includes part-time work, compressed work weeks, telecommuting, and working from home, making it easier for women to balance work and motherhood (SSEEGSR- Outcome 5).
 - Extending the coverage of childcare facilities will reduce the need for mothers and fathers to use family resources and make it difficult for them to have children.
- c) Improve access to reproductive health services by:
 - Enhancing the quality and availability of reproductive health services, including counselling women and couples in situations of infertility.
 - Reducing the cost of essential reproductive health products.
 - Adjusting the costs of medical/hospital fees for obstetric services based on the income of households (SSEEGSR- Outcome2).

Policy Objective 3.2: Ensure that social policy systems, service delivery and infrastructures are adapted to changing demographics.

It is important to incorporate scenarios of demographic change (with an emphasis on ageing) in the national planning and decision-making processes to ensure that the consequences of demographic changes are responded to proactively. However, the most relevant interventions for addressing demographic change in Montserrat include establishing specific health programs for older persons to address their physical, nutritional, and mental health needs and promoting positive messages and new skills education for the ageing population. These initiatives aim to ensure older individuals' well-being and active participation, addressing their healthcare and socio-economic needs.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- a) Manage planning for social services needs on information garnered from scenarios of demographic change by:
 - Preparing various demographic change scenarios using different fertility, mortality, and migration hypotheses.
 - Projecting basic needs on health, education, and housing.
 - Incorporating these results into national planning to manage the expected consequences of population size and age structure changes.
Incorporate further-looking management consequences of demographic change, with emphasis on population ageing, into the national planning and execution processes.
- b) Under the implementation of the National Policy on the Care of Older persons 2020-2026:
 - Developing and implementing health and well-being initiatives for older people by including in health programs initiatives activities related to nutrition, physical activity, and mental health of older persons while improving infrastructure for physical activities and their easy access and providing assistive care options for older people in poverty (SSEEGSR—Outcome 2) (SSEEGSR—Outcome 6).
 - Developing and implement educational and employment opportunities by promoting new skills and opportunities in education for pre- and post-retirement to ensure ongoing economic participation and consider increasing the retirement age based on employment options (SSEEGSR- Outcome 3) (SSEEGSR- Outcome 5,7) (SSEEGSR- Outcome 12).
 - Developing and improving community infrastructure adequate for older persons by ensuring sufficient housing and supportive environments, enhancing accessibility to infrastructure and

services, and creating/increasing social spaces for intergenerational interactions (SSEEGSR- Outcome5) (SSEEGSR- Outcome 12).

- Developing and implementing communication and educational campaigns to promote positive messages on ageing through education and media, promoting education and information for older people in case of natural disasters to better prepare them during emergencies, and creating social and community spaces for older people to share their experiences with the younger generations (SSEEGSR—Outcome 12).

POLICY OUTCOME 4: AN INTEGRATED DATA ECOSYSTEM IS DEVELOPED AND MAINTAINED FOR IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE POPULATION POLICY.

This policy commits to building a robust data ecosystem for monitoring and implementing population policy and the production of various forms of population analyses, expanding the capacities of Montserrat for planning and forecasting, and the design the evidence-based policy, including digitizing the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system, enhancing data protection, and establishing a comprehensive population registry to support evidence-based decision-making and policy development.

Policy Objective 4.1: Develop and implement an integrated data platform for population monitoring incorporating vital events and migration in a centralized platform under the coordination of the Department of Statistics.

Improving demographic data management in Montserrat by integrating a data platform is essential to monitoring this policy and ensuring policies are flexible enough to respond to what the data shows. This includes strengthening national institutional capacities, enhancing their skills, and establishing a well-functioning National Statistical System (NSS). These actions aim to ensure the accurate collection, analysis, and dissemination of demographic data, which is essential for informed national planning and policy development.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- Strengthening the national institutional capacities for better collection, measurement, analysis, and dissemination of demographic data, including births, deaths, and migration, by engaging two more statisticians/data analysts in the Statistical Department and enhancing their demographic analysis, modelling and statistical knowledge and skills.
- Establishing a well-functioning National Statistical System (NSS) by developing, under the auspices of the Statistics Department, a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) linked to the CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (2019-2030).
- Processing, analysing and making available the data from the National Census 2023.
- Ensuring the production of up-to-date quality population data (births, deaths, marriages) and indicators based on administrative data.
- Collecting disaggregated data on persons with disabilities and creating a registry of persons with disabilities to ensure that disability policies are evidence-based and responsive to the needs of the community.
- Maintaining a comprehensive, up-to-date population database, ensuring that all statistics are geographically, demographically, and gender disaggregated to make visible capacities, vulnerabilities, and risks.
- Creating population forecasting models that set targets for population growth and job demands as a key input for the migration policy.
- Providing the data needed to develop overarching plans and local plans (urban, suburban and resettlement areas) that support near-term actions but are based on a long-term vision.

- Strengthening capacity on data and demographic analysis in government ministries for better incorporation of population dynamics in national planning.
- Creating a system for reporting on the outcome and regularly updating the progress indicators when implementing the population policies.

Policy Objective 4.2: Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistical system

Digitizing Montserrat's Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system is crucial for improving data management's accuracy, efficiency, and security, ensuring that vital records are easily accessible and protected, and enabling better policymaking and resource allocation based on reliable demographic data.

Strategic actions and interventions:

- Gain approval for the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System Study and Action Plan
- Develop and implement a fully digitize the system, including adding new layers of security and privacy
- Develop, document and introduce protocols for dissemination of CRVS data.

Policy Objective 4.3: Establish a comprehensive population registry to centralize demographic data for evidence-based decision-making and policy development.

Establishing a comprehensive population registry is crucial for Montserrat as it centralizes demographic data, ensures accurate, up-to-date information for administrative functions and statistical analysis, and enables timely data about population changes to produce evidence to make the right decisions. It also enhances government efficiency and policymaking by supporting e-government capabilities, allowing digital access to vital services like birth certificates and property records, mirroring efficient systems familiar to those abroad. Privacy and data security require robust legal frameworks aligned with global standards to ensure trust.

Strategic actions and interventions:

Establishing a comprehensive population registry enhances government efficiency and diaspora engagement, improves access to e-government services, and supports data-driven policies while ensuring robust data privacy and security standards that align with global best practices.

- Designing a 10-year plan to develop this system, based on United Nations recommendations and the experiences of countries that already count with this system
- Creating the legal and operational framework for the population register that defines the continuous recording and coordinated linkage of information, ensuring up-to-date data on individuals' characteristics, serving administrative functions for program planning and personal identification, and providing accurate data for population and vital statistics.
- Designing the data system to be developed, including identifying the core demographic data to be included, such as birth, death, citizenship, and marital status, in the population register, with capabilities to link and update additional information like education and occupation, ensuring the register remains current and comprehensive.
- Implement coordinated linkages between the population register, civil registration, and vital statistics systems to ensure synchronization and enhance data quality.

VIII. RESULTS FRAMEWORK

GOALS AND SELECTED INDICATORS FOR MONITORING THE MONTSERRAT POPULATION POLICY (MPP)

Overall goal	Policy Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Target 2030	Target 2040
Through rights-based and gender-responsive policies, to ensure the alignment between the demographic aspirations of Montserratians and the country's economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social equity by managing and inducing improvements in the social and economic conditions that influence population change, including size, composition, and distribution, aiming at reaching an agreement with country's defined targets.	I. The quality of life improves, and human capital investment is increased to generate the skills needed to match the market needs of the island, therefore the country becomes more attractive for current residents, particularly young people, to stay in and immigrants, including the diaspora, to come (Retention).	Population size	2023: 4,386	5,400	TBD
		% of the population in working ages (15-64)	64%	65%	TBD
		% of young people (ages 18-29) remaining in the country after completing secondary or tertiary education)	TBD	TBD	TBD
		% of unemployment	2018: 6.5%	5%	TBD
		% of unemployment 15-19, by sex	TBD	TBD	TBD
		Coverage rate of social protection programs, including unemployment benefits and family assistance programs	TBD	TBD	TBD
	II. International migration (both emigration and immigration -new migrants and diaspora) is integrally managed by national authorities and becomes more compatible with workforce and population growth needs (Migration)	Number of migrants admitted to the country as part of the policy implementation	TBD	900	1,000
		% Immigrants successfully employed in sectors with identified workforce needs within one year of arrival	TBD	TBD	TBD
		% workforce gaps filled by immigrants with defined skills, language proficiency, ad other required characteristics, according to the national immigration plan	TBD	TBD	TBD
		Number of Montserratians Diaspora returning the country by sex, age and country.	TBD	100	200
	III. Demographic resilience is central to the national strategy to attain economic growth, social equity, and environmental resilience (Sustainability).	Total Fertility Rate (aspirational)	2022: 1.55	1.70	TBD
		Number of births	TBD	TBD	TBD
		Percentage of older people (65+) covered by pensions or financial assistance.	TBD	TBD	TBD
	IV. An integrated data ecosystem is developed and maintained for implementing and monitoring the Population Policy.	Real time data needed for planning are easily available	TBD	TBD	
		All the systems, but the Population Registry, are in place as recommended by this policy	TBD	2030: All the systems established	
		Population Registry, are in place as recommended by this policy	TBD	2040: Population Registry established	

IX. IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The recommendations in this policy will be implemented through various methods and within different time frames. This approach acknowledges that specific recommendations may be contingent upon the prior implementation of others and that their execution will largely depend on the availability of resources necessary to implement and enforce them effectively. Because of this, the timing and framing of each recommendation will be governed by the annual planning and budgeting systems. In this regard, the oversight ministry (Ministry of Finance) will implement accountability measures to ensure that GoM's planning and budgeting process prioritises the critical actions in the policy and that ministry strategic plans incorporate these actions. The GoM Strategic Outcome Framework tool would inform the policy implementation as part of its annual strategic planning and budget processes for allocating resources.

To ensure the country has the proper institutional framework to implement, coordinate, and monitor the Montserrat Population Policy, a Coordinating Team will be created, a small staff team accountable for championing the strategies and monitoring progress toward the plan's successful implementation. It will act under the direction of the National Population Commission. This Commission comprises the Cabinet, other relevant Government entities, private sector representatives, civil society representatives and international organisations (as observers). It will meet twice a year to discuss the MPP's progress.

This Coordinating Team will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the necessary administrative and legal arrangements and provisions are in place to allow for policy implementation
- Agreeing with every ministry and institution on their specific role in the implementation of this policy, ensuring that one or more ministries cover all interventions included in this policy
- Establishing coordination mechanisms within the different ministries and entities to ensure their harmonisation
- Ensuring that all Government entities have a shared understanding of population and demographic dynamics and their interrelationship with sustainable development.
- Providing ministries and relevant institutions with information and knowledge about the current situation and predicted population and labour force trends under different scenarios
- Informing the National Population Commission permanently, including relevant government entities, private sector representatives, civil society representatives, and international organisations (as observers). This Commission will meet at least once a year or two on any given date to discuss the MPP's progress.

The Montserrat Population Policy Secretariat (MPPS) will closely monitor this policy in collaboration with the Statistic Department of Montserrat (SDM) using the Results framework presented below.

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informed by GoM Strategic Outcome Framework tool as part of its annual strategic planning and budget processes for the allocation of resources.

To ensure the country has the proper institutional framework to implement, coordinate and monitor the Montserrat Population Policy, a Coordinating Team will be created with a small team of staff that is accountable for championing the strategies and monitoring progress toward the plan's successful implementation. It will act under the direction of the National Population Commission. This Commission comprises the Cabinet, other relevant Government entities, private sector representatives, civil society representatives and international organisations (as observers). It will meet twice a year to discuss the MPP's progress.

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This policy will be closely monitored by the Montserrat Population Policy Secretariat (MPPS) in close collaboration with the Statistic Department of Montserrat (SDM) using the Results framework presented below.

X. PRIORITY POLICY INTERVENTIONS 2025-2027

While many of this document's policy and strategy recommendations are not entirely new, they build upon and enhance existing interventions, focusing efforts where they are most needed. This approach aims to foster more significant synergies among the activities implemented by various entities within the Government of Montserrat. The plan presented below outlines the policy priorities for the first two years of implementation, aiming to address the critical issues facing Montserrat and achieve the goals of its Population Policy.

Therefore, Montserrat must prioritize immediate interventions to address the island's demographic fragility, characterized by low fertility, high emigration, constant emigration, and limited immigration. Additionally, the significant increase in the elderly population poses challenges for Montserrat's health and pension systems. Changes in household structures, such as the rise in single-person and female-headed households, also require tailored social support mechanisms to ensure socio-economic stability.

The island's small population, compounded by these demographic challenges, creates a precarious and vulnerable situation threatening socio-economic stability. Given these unique challenges, the government must take the most urgent actions to mitigate risks, improve the labour force, and ensure economic productivity and sustainability.

The proposed interventions offer a promising path towards Montserrat's more resilient and sustainable future. Immediate priorities include stimulating job creation to retain and attract workers, which is essential for providing opportunities to those considering emigration. Strategic immigration policies and interventions are also crucial for fostering a resilient demographic structure in the short and medium term. Other critical interventions include fostering an enabling environment for family formation, fertility, and reproduction by expanding family support systems, such as flexible working policies for women with children, increasing subsidized childcare availability, and providing targeted social programs for single-parent and female-headed households. Continued improvement in access to reproductive health services will support family planning and maternal health outcomes. Developing a multi-sectoral Demographic Resilience Action Plan, incorporating demographic modelling tools and collaborating with regional experts, will support evidence-based policy-making and ensure long-term adaptability.

Furthermore, Montserrat must design and establish a comprehensive migration management plan that aligns immigration strategies, diaspora engagement, and migrant integration with the workforce needs and population growth targets. This involves creating a skills- and rights-based immigration plan supported by labour force modelling, engaging Montserratians abroad in national projects, facilitating their investments, and supporting partnerships with local businesses. Initiatives to improve migrant integration should include minimizing disparities in benefits, removing language barriers, organizing cultural integration activities, and considering the contributions of international homeowners.

Finally, the successful implementation of this plan relies on the active participation and support of all stakeholders, including the government, private sector, civil society, and international partners. Building an integrated data ecosystem for population monitoring is essential to this plan. Montserrat must strengthen the Statistics Department's capabilities with support from CARICOM, the UN, and other partners. The implementation of this policy will begin with a limited set of priority interventions that align with available national resources, can have a significant short-term impact, and will help establish a foundation for long-term demographic resilience and socio-economic sustainability.

These are the critical interventions for the period 2025-2027:

Policy Priorities	Strategy	Economic Benefits Rationale
<p>i. Initiate a set of critical interventions to improve the quality of life in Montserrat to make the country more attractive for current residents, particularly young people, to stay in and for immigrants, including the diaspora, to come.</p>	<p>Develop initial interventions to strengthen human capital through education and skill development and update the educational curricula to match local labour market needs, ensuring young people acquire skills in high-demand areas such as digital literacy, green technologies, and healthcare. Youth wellness programs focusing on mental health and counselling should also be developed to support their well-being.</p>	<p>Addressing the skill gap by aligning educational curricula with labour market needs ensures that young people in Montserrat are better prepared to fill gaps in high-demand sectors, enhancing productivity and economic growth.</p> <p>By improving mental health and well-being through youth wellness programs, we are not just reducing mental health challenges. We are also fostering a more resilient workforce, which is an important factor in ensuring economic sustainability and long-term competitiveness.</p> <p>Building a future workforce by investing in skills related to digital literacy, healthcare, and green technologies positions Montserrat as a forward-looking economy capable of adapting to global changes, ultimately increasing its attractiveness to local and foreign investment.</p>
	<p>Stimulate job creation and retain workers by establishing a labour market task force to identify key growth sectors and address skills gaps, partnering with training institutions to develop targeted skills programs, and initiating public-private partnerships to provide internships, apprenticeships, and job placement opportunities for recent graduates and the diaspora.</p>	<p>Addressing workforce needs by identifying growth sectors and addressing skills gaps helps to ensure that Montserrat's labour force meets industry needs, leading to more efficient and productive industries.</p> <p>Increasing employment opportunities through Internships, apprenticeships, and targeted skills programs helps create pathways to employment, reduce unemployment, and provide young people and returning diaspora members with the opportunity to contribute to the economy.</p> <p>Attracting and retaining talent by enhancing job opportunities and creating a conducive work environment can attract skilled workers and encourage the diaspora to return, contributing to population growth and a more robust economy.</p>
	<p>Aligned with the national economic and sustainability policy, focus on strategies that improve the social and economic conditions and access to services and contribute to making the country more attractive to stay or to come by improving access to quality health services for adults and by advocating for gender-equitable policies that ensure inclusive access to services, and enhance social protection coverage and quality.</p>	<p>Focusing on strategies to improve social and economic conditions, particularly through enhanced adult health services and gender-equitable policies, leads to a healthier and more inclusive society. Better health services reduce absenteeism, enhance productivity, and boost economic output. Healthier adults are better able to participate in the labour force, contributing to growth and reducing healthcare burdens.</p> <p>Advocating for gender-equitable policies ensures greater female workforce participation, enhancing household incomes and economic empowerment. Gender equity also fosters diversity in the labour market, driving innovation and strengthening resilience.</p> <p>Enhanced social protection provides a safety net for vulnerable populations, reducing economic insecurity and promoting financial stability. It also helps maintain consumer spending during downturns and makes Montserrat more attractive</p>

		<p>to immigrants and the diaspora, supporting population stability.</p> <p>Together, these measures create a more attractive environment for residents and newcomers, promoting population growth, workforce participation, and a resilient economy aligned with national sustainability goals.</p>
<p>II. Design and start establishing a comprehensive migration management plan that aligns immigration strategies, diaspora engagement, and migrant integration with Montserrat's workforce needs and population growth targets, supported by housing and community-building initiatives to ensure sustainable economic and social development.</p>	<p>Design a comprehensive, skills- and rights-based immigration plan supported by labour force modelling that ensures labour market needs and population growth targets are effectively met by considering a clear pathway for skilled migrants and diaspora return.</p>	<p>Developing a skills- and rights-based immigration plan aligned with Montserrat's economic and population growth targets ensures that the country can fill labour shortages in critical sectors, thus boosting productivity and sustaining economic growth. A structured pathway for skilled migrants helps address specific skill gaps in the economy, reducing costs associated with unfulfilled labour needs. Using labour force modelling, the government can efficiently allocate resources, minimize mismatches between available skills and labour market demands, and ensure the workforce is equipped to support key industries, ultimately enhancing economic resilience and competitiveness.</p>
	<p>Strengthens links between the diaspora and the local economy, contributing to long-term development by engaging Montserratians abroad through specific national projects, facilitating their investments and supporting partnerships between local businesses and the diaspora to foster economic opportunities.</p>	<p>Engaging the diaspora in specific national projects and facilitating their investments allows Montserrat to leverage its expatriate community's skills, financial resources, and networks. This can generate capital inflows, foster entrepreneurship, and create job opportunities, contributing directly to economic growth. Partnerships between the diaspora and local businesses stimulate innovation and bring fresh perspectives to Montserrat's economy. By utilizing the expertise of Montserratians abroad (In situ or virtual), the country strengthens its economic base, diversifies its industries, and builds a more resilient economy that can sustain long-term growth.</p>
	<p>Initiate selected activities that contribute to improve migrant integration, including minimizing the differences in benefits, helping in eliminating language barriers, organizing cultural integration activities, and considering the contribution of international homeowners.</p>	<p>Improved migrant integration promotes social cohesion, reducing the costs associated with social exclusion and unfulfilled potential. Eliminating language barriers and fostering cultural integration improves community relations and allows migrants to contribute more fully to the workforce, ultimately leading to a more diverse, productive, and resilient economy. It also contributes to make Montserrat a more attractive place to live, encouraging both international homeowners and returning Montserratians to stay.</p>

<p>III. Design and initiate implementation of critical policies that contribute to the demographic resilience of Montserrat as a key strategy for economic growth, social equity, and environmental resilience and sustainability by fostering an enabling environment for family formation, fertility, and reproduction and by integrating demographic modelling tools into policy planning.</p>	<p>Based on resource availability, design and implement a set of phased interventions aimed at expanding family support systems, such as a) creating flexible working policies for women with children, b) increasing the availability of subsidized childcare centres and after-school programs, and c) providing targeted social programs for single-parent and female-headed households. These interventions will be reinforced by promoting awareness campaigns about family support programs being implemented.</p>	<p>Expanding family support systems directly enhances female labour force participation by enabling mothers to balance family responsibilities with employment. This increases household incomes, reduces poverty rates among single-parent families, and supports gender equity in the workforce. Subsidized childcare and flexible working policies further contribute to higher productivity, economic growth, and better utilization of human capital. With the help of targeted communication campaigns, these interventions further contribute to higher productivity, economic growth, and better utilization of human capital. They can also facilitate reproduction in women and families where these restrictions can restrict their reproductive decisions.</p>
	<p>Continue improving access to quality reproductive health services by ensuring these services are readily accessible and contribute to supporting family planning and improving maternal and child health outcomes.</p>	<p>Quality reproductive health services reduce healthcare costs in the long term by preventing maternal and child health complications. Enhanced maternal and child health outcomes contribute to a healthier future labour force, reducing absenteeism and improving productivity, which supports overall economic growth. Additionally, ensuring reproductive autonomy empowers women and fosters greater economic inclusion, ultimately benefiting the national economy.</p>
	<p>Start developing a multi-sectoral Demographic Resilience Action Plan incorporating demographic modelling tools into national and sectoral policy planning by collaborating with regional and international demographic organizations and experts to align strategies with best practices and ensure adaptability and sustainability over the short, medium, and long term.</p>	<p>A comprehensive action plan that integrates demographic modelling tools and expert input will provide a clear roadmap for managing demographic changes, facilitating evidence-based decision-making, and enhancing policy effectiveness. This approach enables efficient resource allocation, reduces the risk of policy failure, and strengthens Montserrat's resilience to demographic shifts. Ultimately, it promotes sustainable economic growth by investing in priority areas that yield high returns and align with demographic trends.</p>
<p>IV. Develop the foundations to build an integrated data ecosystem for population monitoring by improving data collection and strengthening the Statistics Department's capabilities</p>	<p>Develop and implement a plan for Strengthening the Statistics Department of Montserrat to monitor population trends with support from CARICOM, UN and other partners.</p>	<p>Developing an integrated data ecosystem for population monitoring in Montserrat will yield significant economic benefits by enhancing policy planning, reducing overlaps and improving resource allocation. Strengthening the Statistics Department of Montserrat with data management and analysis capacities and demographic projection and modelling techniques will ensure regular, data-driven insights into population trends, fertility, migration, and labour force dynamics. This informed decision-making reduces inefficiencies, allows for targeted investments, and better aligns workforce needs with economic growth goals.</p>

	<p>Design a proposal for digitalization of Vital Statistics Data with the support of the United Nations Statistical Division and CARICOM.</p>	<p>Fully digitizing the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system, with added security and privacy features, will streamline administrative processes, reduce errors, and improve data accuracy, which is crucial for effective policy development.</p>
	<p>Initial design of a national population registry with support from CARICOM, UN and other countries of the region.</p>	<p>Furthermore, establishing a comprehensive population registry will provide a robust evidence base to support policies and pave the way for more efficient planning. It can address demographic challenges, optimize service delivery, and improve social and economic outcomes. Montserrat can leverage accurate, real-time data to make more strategic investments in public services and infrastructure, reduce administrative costs, and enhance overall economic resilience.</p>

XI. CONCLUSIONS

The Montserrat Population Policy represents a critical step toward addressing the island's demographic challenges and ensuring long-term sustainability. This policy's comprehensive approach integrates economic, social, and environmental strategies to create a more resilient and prosperous society. By focusing on improving the quality of life for current residents, attracting new immigrants, and engaging the Montserratian diaspora, the policy aims to reverse population decline and support sustainable development.

The policy outlines four primary outcomes that are essential to achieving its goals. Firstly, it seeks to improve the quality of life in Montserrat, making it more attractive for current residents, particularly young people, to stay and for new immigrants to come. Reaching this goal requires significant human capital, health, education, and social protection investments. Strategies include promoting healthy diets, improving healthcare services, enhancing educational opportunities, and increasing social protection coverage. By creating a supportive and inclusive environment, the policy aims to retain residents and attract new ones, fostering a vibrant and dynamic society.

Secondly, the policy aims to manage international migration effectively to meet workforce and population growth needs. Managing this objective requires developing a ten-year skills-based immigration plan to attract the necessary number and type of immigrants, aligning them with the national economic and social development goals. Strategies to achieve this include fast-track residency permits, integration services, and targeted incentives to attract skilled workers and young families. Additionally, the policy emphasizes the importance of engaging the Montserratian diaspora through financial incentives, investment opportunities, and programs to facilitate return migration.

Thirdly, the policy ensures demographic resilience by integrating population growth into the national strategy for economic development, social equity, and environmental sustainability and by creating a more enabling context for family formation, fertility, and reproduction. Key strategies include providing financial and practical support for childbearing and early childcare, promoting flexible working policies for women, and improving access to reproductive health services. The policy aims to generate conditions that could result in increasing birth rates and support sustainable population growth by eliminating any restrictions women and couples may have for having children.

Fourthly, the policy aims to build and maintain an integrated data ecosystem to support the implementation and monitoring of population policies, which involves improving the quality and availability of demographic data, enhancing data collection and analysis capabilities, and ensuring evidence-based decision-making. The policy can be effectively monitored and adjusted by building a robust data ecosystem to respond to changing demographic trends and needs.

A critical aspect of the policy's success will be its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation framework, which demands establishing clear implementation timelines, assigning responsibilities to relevant government departments and stakeholders, and ensuring adequate funding and resources. The MPPS will conduct regular monitoring and evaluation to track progress, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and make necessary adjustments. Ensuring that the policy remains responsive to the population's needs and achieves its intended outcomes entails that the government employs a transparent and participatory approach involving all stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, and international partners.

In conclusion, the Montserrat Population Policy provides a strategic framework for addressing the island's demographic challenges and promoting sustainable development. The policy's goals and outcomes are designed to create a more vibrant, equitable, and resilient Montserrat by aligning population growth with economic, social, and environmental goals. Strategies such as improving quality of life, managing migration, ensuring demographic resilience, and building a solid data ecosystem are critical to achieving these objectives. This policy's successful implementation and

rigorous monitoring will require the collective efforts of government, civil society, and international partners, working together to build a brighter future for Montserrat and its people. Montserrat can overcome its demographic challenges and achieve long-term sustainability and prosperity by fostering a supportive and inclusive environment.

Given the range of proposed actions and the limitations of available resources, a set of prioritized policy recommendations has been designed for implementation from 2025 to 2027. Montserrat faces critical demographic issues that require immediate action to fulfil its Population Policy goals. Given the island's specific challenges, it is crucial for the government to focus on the most pressing interventions. Key immediate priorities include stimulating job creation to attract and retain workers, which is essential to counteract demographic decline. This approach aims to provide viable opportunities for residents who might otherwise consider emigration, thereby stabilizing and sustaining Montserrat's population. By addressing these pressing issues, Montserrat can create a foundation for long-term demographic resilience and socio-economic stability.

In conclusion, the demographic trend characterized by a small and declining population, aging demographics, shifting household structures, and migration pattern demand strategic and timely interventions. Prioritizing policies aimed at enhancing job creation, building human capital through education and health initiatives, and establishing inclusive and proactive immigration policies is crucial. Additionally, developing robust support systems for diverse household types and older adults is key to fostering demographic resilience, thereby supporting Montserrat's long-term socio-economic stability and growth.

XII. APENDICES

The process followed by the National Population Policy

Step 1: The first step was to develop the Population Situation Analysis, which describes the country's current population situation and expected trends and identifies the main areas of intervention for population policy. This document is supported by findings extracted from the analysis of tables prepared using information from the Statistics Department of Montserrat. Preliminary data from the 2022 Census has also been used to describe the current demographic situation of the country.

Step 2: Second, pertinent literature, including studies, reports, action plans, program documents, and national strategies, was thoroughly examined. Furthermore, in preparation for this policy, population policies from neighbouring regional nations were also analysed for insights. All these documents are listed below.

Step 3: Third, consultations with national stakeholders spanning government, private sector, civil society, and international bodies were conducted. These consultations delivered valuable perspectives that shaped the Montserrat Population Policy (MPP). These discussions were complemented by additional inputs solicited from the national focal point. This consultative approach ensured that the MPP reflects the visions and ambitions of various sectoral voices. The National Consultation occurred at the beginning of 2024 and involved stakeholders from the government, civil society, UK authorities, and international organisations. The policy suggestions from these consultations focused on ensuring demographic, economic, and environmental resilience.

Step 4: Fourth, this population policy document was prepared considering the data, insights, and recommendations acquired in the previous steps. National authorities have revised, provided final recommendations and validated this policy.

Step 5: Fifth, this policy is implemented, monitored, and evaluated by the proposal below. National authorities will have the flexibility to adapt and change if needed, this policy according to new information and priorities.

List of stakeholders

GOVERNMENT

- Office of The Premier
- Cabinet Secretariat
- Office of the Deputy Governor
- Office of the Auditor General
- Attorney General
- Supreme Court
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
- Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
- Montserrat Social Security
- Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports
- Ministry of Health, Social Services, Education, Youth Affairs & Sports
- Glendon Hospital
- Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing & Environment
- Ministry of Communication, Works, Energy & Labour
- Montserrat Port Authority
- Legislative Assembly

- Montserrat Volcano Observatory
- Montserrat Arts Council

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- Youth representatives
- SAS Parent Teacher's Association
- Davy Hill Community Action Group
- UWI Open Campus
- Montserrat Small Business Association
- Montserrat Association for Persons with Disabilities.

UK AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office
- United Nations Joint Programme
- GRID Programme Mission

Definition of key terms

Population Resilience: Population resilience refers to the capacity of a population to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adverse changes and challenges, such as economic disruptions, natural disasters, or demographic shifts, while maintaining or quickly regaining its functionality and well-being.

Demographic Fragility: Is the situation faced by a country that must deal with undesired economic, political, social, and environmental consequences derived from the adverse impacts of demographic changes, such as negative population growth, rapidly ageing populations, low birth rates, or high dependency ratios.

Total Fertility Rate: Is the number of children a woman will have in average at the end of her reproductive life, if this woman experiences the fertility by age of the moment and survive between 15 and 50 years.

Life Expectancy at Birth: Is the number of years a person born today will live if it is exposed to the current probability of dying by age.

Persons with disabilities: Persons with disabilities include "...those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is found in Article 1.

References: List of key documents used in the elaboration of this policy

National Documents

- Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap for Montserrat. Draft 1/3/24. Authors: Tanya Durlen and Judge Matharu
- Government of Montserrat. Ministry of Health and Social Services (2020). *National Policy on Older Persons 2020-2026* (V.5 Draft). <https://www.gov.ms/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/National-Policy-on-Care-of-Older-Persons-v5.pdf>. Accessed on Jan 23, 2024.
- Montserrat Sustainable Development Plan 2023-2035 National Outcomes – SDP National Consultation: Strategic Visioning Report (July 2022)
- Strategic Plan: 2022/23 to 2024/25. Supreme Court Services
- Summary report on phase 1 -Visioning exercise - for the new Montserrat Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP). National Consultation for the Development of the Montserrat Sustainable Development Plan. Albert Daley and Trevor Spence. Ministry of Finance & Economic Management | July 2022
- Strategic Plan: 2023/24 to 2025/26. Ministry of Health and Social Services

International Documents

- [Report of the International Conference on Population and Development. Cairo, 5-13 September 1994. United Nations.](#)
- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. General Assembly, 21 October 2015. United Nations A/RES/70/1.
- Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development. First session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Full integration of population dynamics into rights-based sustainable development with equality: key to the Cairo Programme of Action beyond 2014. ECLAC, Montevideo, 12-15 August 2013.

Population Policies Developed in Neighbouring Countries

- Commonwealth of Dominica: National Population Policy and Action Plan (NPPAP). Ministry of Planning, Economic Development, Climate resilience, Sustainable Development and Renewal Energy With the technical and financial support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), October 19, 2022.
- Barbados Population Policy. Final Draft Document. Prepared by Dr. Godfrey St. Bernard for the Barbados Population Commission, December 2020.
- National Population and Sustainable Development Policy of Jamaica – Final. Revision of National Population Policy and Plan of Action. ICON-INSTITUT Public Sector GmbH, April 2020.
- Nationaal Bevolkingsbeleid 2021-2040. Republiek Suriname (National Population Policy 2021-2040. Republic of Suriname). Redactiegroep Bevolkingsbeleid Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken. Paramaribo, Suriname. February 2021.

Other Policies Developed in Neighbouring Countries

- JAMAICA White Paper National Policy on International Migration and Development April 2017. Planning Institute of Jamaica
- National Diaspora Policy. Government of Jamaica. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, 2021.

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